10. The Standing Committee may, if necessary, invite experts and persons eminent in specific fields to have the benefit of their views while deliberating upon the related subjects.

11 After the 73rd and 74th constitution Amendment Acts, decentralization of resources, powers and responsibilities to Urban and Rural Panchayat Raj institutions have become very important. The Council recommends adequate devolution in this respect from the States to Local bodies.

12. Regional Development boards and other regional development arrangements within the State require to be fully strengthened wherever necessary and made operational with full delegation of financial and executive powers. The State Governments would be fully involved in making these arrangements and in the exercise of powers under Article 371 of the Constitution.

[Translation]

Sale of Cow-Products

574. SHRI DADA BABURAO PARANJPE : Will the Minister of ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING be pleased to state :

(a) whether despite a complete ban on cow slaughter in Madhya Pradesh, cow-products such as toffees, chewing-gum, futtella and metas are available openly in markets, and

(b) the preventive steps proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH) : (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the table of the House.

Review of Capital Punishment

575. KUMARI UMA BHARATI :
SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH :
DR RAMKRISHNA KUSMARIA :

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to constitute any Commission for reviewing the capital punishment, and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

[English]

Prices of Essential Commodities

576. SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA : Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the prices of basic commodities like cereals, pulses, sugar, fruits, vegetables, edible oils, milk, etc. have highly increased during the past six months;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reasons for the hike in prices of basic commodities; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) and (b) Variations in the Wholesale Price Index of some of the basic commodities during the last six months ending October 1996 are given below.

Commodity	Variation (per cent)
Cereals	11.1
Pulses	0.5
Vegetables	21.8
Fruits	-6.5
Sugar	0.8
Milk	2.0
Edible Oils	3.3

(c) The reasons for the increase in the prices of some of the essential commodities can be attributed to the hike in the prices of petroleum products, gap between demand and supply and seasonal factors.

(d) Government has accorded the highest priority to the control of prices of essential commodities. Apart from certain long term measures to increase the production of essential goods, imports under Open General Licence (OGL) of items which are in short supply like edible oils and pulses are encouraged to augment the total availability of these items. Some of the commodities are also supplied through the Public Distribution System and Cooperative Stores at below market prices. Stringent actions are being taken against hoarders and black marketeers and other indulging in unfair trade practices under the Essential Commodities Act and Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of supplies of Essential Commodities Act etc. by the State/UT Governments.